

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 MC-02 ACDA-07 /078 W

-----115354 060136Z /73

R 011200Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0480

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 0449

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PINR, MPOL, SE, TZ

SUBJECT: STRENGTH AND ROLE OF SEYCHELLES SECURITY FORCES

REF: VICTORIA 359

SUMMARY: EASE BY WHICH RENE GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN JUNE 5 COUP D'ETAT COUPLED WITH CONTINUING CONCERNS ABOUT EXTERNAL INTERVENTION, DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND POSSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL IN-FIGHTING HAVE LED TO STRENGTHENING AND DIVERSIFICATION OF SEYCHELLES SECURITY FORCES. TRAINING OF SMALL ARMY BY TANZANIAN ADVISORS IS WELL UNDERWAY AND DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND POLICE STRONG POINTS HAVE BEEN IMPROVED. CURRENT EMPHASIS ON SECURITY HAS CATAPULTED MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS BERLOUIS INTO KEY POSITION AND NATIONAL PROMINENCE.END SUMMARY.

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1. PRIOR TO JUNE 5 COUP D'ETAT, ONLY SECURITY FORCE IN SEYCHELLES WAS 500-MAN POLICE DEPARTMENT. AMONG POLICE, ONLY 130-MAN SPECIAL FORCE WAS GIVEN WEAPONS TRAINING. A PRINCIPAL REASON FOR SUCCESS OF COUP WAS FACT THAT NO GROUP OF TRAINED, ARMED MEN WAS MAINTAINED AS QUICK REACTION FORCE TO PUT UP INITIAL RESISTANCE. (MANCHAM REPORTEDLY TURNED

DOWN SUGGESTION BY POLICE ADVISORS TO KEEP PLATOON ON CONSTANT ALERT). SPECIAL FORCE, WHICH INCLUDED LARGE NUMBER OF KNOWN MANCHAM SUPPORTERS, WAS WELL TRAINED AND DISCIPLINED BY BRITISH ADVISORS WHO INCLUDED REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR FROM GRENADIER GUARDS.

2. NEW REGIME IS CONSCIOUS OF NEED TO AVOID LACK OF PREPAREDNESS WHICH ASSISTED ITS RISE TO POWER. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, SEYCHELLES SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED THROUGH THE CREATION OF A "LIBERATION ARMY" AND "PEOPLES MILITIA," BOTH OF WHICH ARE COMMANDED BY PRESIDENT RENE THROUGH HIS MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS OGILVIE BERLOUIS. POLICE COMMISSIONER PILLAY ALSO REPORTS TO BERLOUIS, A YOUNG, INTENSE, MULATTO WHO WAS RENE'S PARTY REPRESENTATIVE IN DAR ES SALAAM FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND ASSAULT LEADER IN JUNE 5 COUP.

3. BERLOUIS, RAYMOND BONTE, MACDONALD MARENGO AND PHILIPPE LUCAS (PLATOON COMMANDERS IN SMALL 60-100 MAN ARMY) ALL REPORTEDLY RECEIVED PRE-COUP TRAINING IN TANZANIA. TWENTY TANZANIAN MILITARY ADVISORY TEAM, WHICH ARRIVED SEYCHELLES SHORTLY AFTER COUP (REFTEL) IS MIDWAY THROUGH TRAINING PERIOD FOR ARMY RECRUITS. OFFICERS AND MEN IN NEW ARMY WERE DRAWN NEARLY EXCLUSIVELY FROM 200 STRONG CONTINGENT OF RELIABLE RENE SUPPORTERS WHO ATTACKED POLICE ARMORIES DURING COUP. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED BUT PLAUSIBLE REPORTS THAT HARSH MILITARY REGIMEN HAS CAUSED A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF RECRUITS TO DROP OUT AND THAT THERE HAS

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BEEN CONSIDERABLE FRICTION (INCLUDING SEVERAL FIGHTS) BETWEEN SEYCHELLOIS AND TANZANIANS.

4. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING OF ESTIMATED 1,500 RECRUITS FOR PEOPLE'S MILITIA HAS BEEN DEFERRED UNTIL AFTER ARMY TRAINING IS COMPLETED. ROLE OF UNPAID, VOLUNTEER MILITIA HAS YET TO BE FULLY DEFINED. ALTHOUGH MILITIA WILL HAVE RUDIMENTARY MILITARY TRAINING, IT MOST LIKELY WILL BE USED PRIMARILY AS INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN VILLAGES AND IN CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS. BOTH ARMY AND MILITIA WILL RECEIVE LARGE DOSES OF POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION.

5. IN PAST WEEK, GOVERNMENT PRESS AND RADIO HAVE GIVEN MAJOR COVERAGE TO SECURITY FORCES. ON JULY 22 IT WAS REPORTED THAT ARTILLERY UNIT HAD CONDUCTED MAJOR EXERCISE UTILIZING LARGE CALIBRE ANTI-TANK AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS. BERLOUIS ANNOUNCED THAT ARMY WOULD SHORTLY BE GIVEN TRAINING WITH LIGHT-HEAVY MACHINE GUNS AND CLAIMED IT WAS "READY FOR ANYTHING". ON JULY 26, PRESIDENT RENE VISITED THE ARMY TRAINING FACILITY NEAR AIRPORT. PHOTOGRAPHS, PUBLISHED AFTER VISIT IDENTIFIED TANZANIAN ADVISOR (MAJOR MGWILIZE) AND SHOWED RECRUITS OPERATING RECOILESS RIFLES AND LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN MOUNTED

ON TRIPOD. OTHER NOTABLE MILITARY ACTIVITIES INCLUDE ERECTION OF SANDBAG EMPLACEMENTS AT SPECIAL FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND ATOP CENTRAL POLICE STATION AND REPORTED ESTABLISHMENT OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY TO PROTECT AIRPORT.

6. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE RIVALRY BETWEEN POLICE ESTABLISHMENT, INCLUDING SPECIAL FORCE, AND ARMY IS INEVITABLE. THE TWO MAIN REASONS GIVEN FOR THIS ARE FACT THAT BULK OF POLICE ARE CONSIDERED TO BE PRO-MANCHAM OR APOLITICAL WHILE ARMY AND MILITIA ARE COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF RENE ZEALOTS. SECOND FACTOR, IS ALLEGED WIDE DISCREPANCIES IN PAY WHEREBY SOLDIER/RECRUITS ALLEGEDLY ARE RECEIVING U.S. DOLS 200 PER MONTH, NEARLY THREE TIMES MORE THAN POLICE CONSTABLE. POLICE COMMISSIONER PILLAY, A CAREER POLICE OFFICER, HAS TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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ME HE IS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN SEPARATE IDENTITY AND FUNCTION OF HIS DEPARTMENT.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SECURITY FORCES ALSO HAS POTENTIALLY FAR REACHING POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN UNSETTLED POST-COUP PERIOD. EXISTENCE OF TRAINED BODY OF WELL ARMED MEN UNDER THE PERSONAL CONTROL OF RENE SHOULD SERVE TO PLACE LIMIT ON SCOPE OF ACTION AVAILABLE TO AMBITIOUS FIGURES IN HIS GOVERNMENT. IN THIS CONNECTION, EMBASSY HAS HEARD RECENTLY FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT AGRICULTURE MINISTER FERRARI (SUPPORTED BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE JACQUES HODOUL) IS ENGAGED IN BACKSTAGE POWER PLAY WITH MORE MODERATE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TOURISM GUY SINON FOR POSITION OF PRIMUS INTER PARES AFTER RENE.

8. OFFSHOOT OF CURRENT EMPHASIS ON SECURITY IS RISE TO NATIONAL PROMINENCE OF BERLOUIS, WHO APPEARS TO BE MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME IN CREATING A PERSONAL FOLLOWING AND IS ACCORDED INCREASING ATTENTION BY GOVERNMENT PRESS. IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT RENE IN ORCHESTRATING EFFORT TO ENHANCE PRESTIGE OF BERLOUIS, WHO IS THOUGHT TO BE TOTALLY LOYAL TO RENE. THUS FAR, BERLOUIS, WHO IS OFTEN PHOTOGRAPHED IN CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORM, IS PROJECTING PUBLIC IMAGE OF A KIND OF INDIAN OCEAN CHE GUEVERA.

9. COMMENT: NEW ARMY CLEARLY PROVIDES GOVERNMENT WITH BETTER EQUIPPED, BETTER TRAINED AND MORE ALERT FORCE THAN EXISTED PRIOR TO COUP. NONETHELESS, IT IS UNTESTED AND, DESPITE BERLOUIS' CONFIDENCE, WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO SUCCESSFULLY RESIST FOREIGN INTERVENTION OF SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH. ALTHOUGH REGIME APPEARS CONFIDENT IT PRESENTLY ABLE TO CONTROL DOMESTIC OPPOSITION, IT REMAINS CONCERNED ABOUT OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES OF FORMER GOVERNMENT MINISTERS. WE SUSPECT A PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE OF RECENT PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN ABOUT SECURITY FORCES MAY WELL HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN MANCHAM'S FORMER MINISTERS AND THEIR POSSIBLE BACKERS.
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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977VICTOR00449
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770282-0224
Format: TEL
From: VICTORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 VICTORIA 359
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1426313
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STRENGTH AND ROLE OF SEYCHELLES SECURITY FORCES
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PINR, MPOL, SE, TZ
To: STATE DAR ES SALAAM
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/93f52150-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009